

CONDEMNED AND REDEEMED:

A TALE OF THE LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLE



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Scott H. Miller
Nov. 2020

JUNE 28, 1914 - ASSASSINATION OF ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND, AND
HIS WIFE, SOPHIE.

JULY 28, 1914 - AUSTRIA-HUNGARY DECLARES WAR ON SERBIA
BY MID AUGUST, EUROPE WAS AT WAR.

**HEIR TO AUSTRIAN THRONE ASSASSINATED;
WIFE BY HIS SIDE ALSO SHOT TO DEATH;
EARLIER ATTEMPT ON THEIR LIVES FAILED**

HEIR TO THE AUSTRIAN THRONE AND HIS WIFE, VICTIMS OF ASSASSIN.



Francis Ferdinand, Nephew of Emperor Francis Joseph, Killed in Bosnian Capital an Hour After Warding Off Bomb Which Injures Score.

SLAYER A SERBIAN SOCIALIST

Volley from Revolver Hits Archduke and Duchess of Hohenburg as They Are Driving Together in Automobile in Town of Sarajevo—New Heir, Charles Joseph, 27 Years Old.

(By Cable to The Tribune)
Sarajevo, Bosnia, June 28.—The Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, and his morganatic wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, were shot to death to-day in the main street of this, the Bosnian capital. Bullets from a magazine revolver in the hands of an eighteen-year-old youth killed the heir apparent and his wife, and thus completed the grim task a madman had unsuccessfully attempted only a few hours before by hurling a bomb at the royal automobile.

Another terrible chapter has thus been written into the tragic

A number of Americans decided to enter the war prior to the United State's Declaration of War on April 6, 1917. Most joined foreign armies, including those of Canada, Great Britain, and Germany. Others served in non-combative roles, often as ambulance drivers, including



Mrs. Norweb



Walt Disney

The best known of the Americans fighting with a foreign force were the pilots of the Escadrille de Chasse Nieuport 124 (Escadrille Américain), organized in 1916, and better known as the Lafayette Escadrille. Composed of Americans under French command, and French mechanics, their symbol was a screaming Indian head.

The unit was very small, and included a total of only 38 pilots before the unit was disbanded and incorporated into the 103rd Aero Squadron on February 18, 1918.



Pilot William Thaw with unit mascots Whiskey and Soda.

French La Semeuse Two Franc Coin with Engraved Reverse
to Emil Forst, a volunteer with the Lafayette Escadrille,
purchased from a dealer's junk box about 1997.



February 26, 2000, I contacted the Aerodrome Forum

Does anyone have any information about an Emil Forst? I recently came across a dog tag engraved Emil Forst / 24027 / Volontaire / Escadrille / LaFayette, and wanted to find out a bit about the person. Thanks.

Responses received:

1. No individual with that name appears on the roster of the L.E. VBR. Ieb
2. I hate to be the fearer of bad news but you have been "Hood-Winked"
3. Could old Emil fought against the LE? The name sounds Germanic.
4. Could it be another mix up between Lafayette Escadrille and Lafayette Flying Corp?

Overall, not very encouraging.

Ten years later, another message showed up on the
Aerodrome Forum

18 September 2010, 03:50 PM

There was a 2000 bulletin board post by "Scott" looking for info about Emil Forst with the Lafayette Escadrille. Scott had Emil's dog tag and responders to the post thought the tag(s) weren't authentic. Emil Forst was my grandmother's brother and was a mechanic with the LE. I have photo of him in his WWI uniform and a painting of the LE indian head insignia on calfskin that was handed down to me from him. I would be interested in contacting Scott about Emil Forst's dogtags or with anyone having any additional information about him or Scott.

The plot thickens...

On November 15, 2010, Bonhams held a sale that included lot 5332, a rare and historic fuselage insignia panel from a Spad VII flown by the Lafayette Escadrille and originally collected by Sergeant Emil Forst, who was an aircraft mechanic with the 103rd Aero Squadron. It sold for \$17,750.

Unfortunately, it is not clear that this is from the Lafayette Escadrille.



The United States Army Air Service (USAAS) "Indian Head" insignia of the 103rd Aero Squadron was adopted from the French Air Service's Escadrille Lafayette, whose pilots transferred into the 103rd Aero Squadron in February 1918.

This insignia matches that of a Spad VII in the photograph album of mechanic Emil Forst from 103rd Aero Squadron.

Air and Space Museum





Pilot and airplane from 103rd Aero Squadron
with the Screaming Indian Head insignia.

Emil Forst on Ancestry



Sgt. Emil Forst

Emil Forst was born in New York on December 10, 1891. Prior to WWI he worked for his father as a chauffeur. He enlisted at Ft. Slocum on August 10, 1917, and was promoted to sergeant on November 17, 1917. On November 23, 1917, Forst sailed from New York on the S.S. Baltic. He was promoted to Sergeant First Class on October 15, 1918.

Forst served overseas from November 23, 1917 until March 3, 1919, and was discharged May 16, 1919.

Forst, Emil		24027	623	1½
(Surname)	(Christian name)	(Army serial number)	(Race: White or colored)	
Residence:	Corona Ave	Elmhurst	LI	NEW YORK
	(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(County)	(State)
* Enlisted in	RA at Ft Slocum NY			Aug 10/17
† Born in	New York NY			25 8 /12 yrs
Organizations:	103 Aer Sq to disch			
Grades:	Pvt 1 Cl Sept 7/17; Sgt Nov 17/17; Sgt 1 Cl Oct 15/18			
Engagements:				
Wounds or other injuries received in action: None.				
‡ Served overseas:	Nov 23/17 to Mar 3/19			
§ Hon. disch.	May 16/19 on demobilization			
Was reported	0 per cent disabled on date of discharge, in view of occupation.			
Remarks:				

Sgt. Forst's Draft Registration

Form 1 *1897* REGISTRATION CARD No. *101*

1	Name in full <i>Emil Forst</i> (Given name) (Family name)	Age, in yrs. <i>25</i>
2	Home address <i>Corona ave - Elmhurst N.Y.</i> (No.) (Street) (City) (State)	
3	Date of birth <i>December 10 1891</i> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? <i>Natural-born</i>	
5	Where were you born? <i>New York N.Y. USA.</i> (Town) (State) (Nation)	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? <i>X</i>	
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? <i>Chauffeur</i> <i>25</i>	
8	By whom employed? <i>Joseph Forst</i> Where employed? <i>Corona ave - Elmhurst 2d</i>	
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? <i>no</i>	
10	Married or single (which)? <i>Single</i> Race (specify which)? <i>Caucasian</i>	
11	What military service have you had? Rank <i>none</i> ; branch <i>X</i> years <i>X</i> ; Nation or State <i>X</i>	
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? <i>no</i>	

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

Emil Forst's WWII Draft Registration

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER	1. NAME (Print)			ORDER NUMBER
U 1132	EMIL		FORST	
	(First)	(Middle)	(Last)	

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)

84 WALNUT STREET NEW ROCHELLE WEST N.Y.

(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS

SAME

[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]

4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS	6. PLACE OF BIRTH
N.R.2 - 1487	50	NEW YORK
(Exchange) (Number)	DATE OF BIRTH	(Town or county)
	12 - 10 - 1891	N.Y. N.Y.
	(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)	(State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS

HELEN M. FORST 84 WALNUT STREET NEW ROCHELLE N.Y.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

PACKARD MOTOR CAR CO OF N.Y.

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

1050 ATLANTIC AVE BROOKLYN KINGS N.Y.

(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21630-2

Emil Forst
(Registrant's signature)

After the war, Forst lived in New Rochelle with his wife Helen Dassler, and their two children, Richard and Mary.

Census and other records indicate Forst worked as an automobile salesman for Packard.

Emil First died on September 5, 1981.



So, what about Emil Forst's claim to be a volunteer with the Lafayette Escadrille?

1. We know the engraving on the coin is contemporary, and bears Forst's service number.
2. Emil Forst was assigned to the 103rd Aero Squadron as a mechanic, and was in France prior to the disbandment of the the Lafayette Escadrille.
3. The 103rd seems to have trained alongside the Lafayette Escadrille, and were seen as the successors to that unit, even retaining the Screaming Indian Head insignia, and being mentioned in private, as well as official communications as the 103rd Aero Squadron (Lafayette Escadrille)



So, to answer why this coin is engraved Volontaire
Escadrille Lafayette?

I don't know.